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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002346

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SUBJECT: TAWAFUQ WALKS OUT OF COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES TO  
PROTEST KIDNAPPING OF FEMALE PARLIAMENTARIAN

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret M. Scobey for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY Reactions to the July 1 Sadr City car bombing and kidnapping of a female Tawafuq parliamentarian dominated the July 2 Council of Representatives (CoR) session. A leading Sadrism demanded that the CoR vote to choose a date for MNF-I withdrawal and to activate "popular committees" to defend areas under terrorist threat. No action was taken on either proposal. The Tawafuq bloc announced that it would boycott CoR sessions until kidnapped MP Tayseer al-Mashadani is released. No Tawafuq members attended the July 3 session.

This was not enough to prevent a quorum (about 140 members attended), and the CoR went forward with its legislative agenda for the day. The only agenda item that was not acted upon was the extension of the state of emergency, which according to the prevailing CoR interpretation requires a two-thirds parliamentary vote. END SUMMARY

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Sadrism Demands  
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12. (U) The July 2 Council of Representatives (CoR) session began with Shia Coalition and leading Sadrism member Baha al-Araji condemning the July 1 suicide bombing in Sadr City and the kidnapping of Tawafuq CoR member Tayseer al-Mashadani. He asked that the CoR vote on two issues to limit the authority of MNF-I: (a) choose a date for MNF-I withdrawal and (b) activate popular committees ("mijalis sha'abiya") in areas that face terrorist acts. Sunni Arab independent Mithal al-Alusi replied that MNF-I is present in Iraq based on GoI requests and that the formation of popular committees would weaken the government. Other Shia Coalition speakers called for stronger and better organized Iraqi Security Forces and for greater independence of the Ministries of Interior and Defense. Before departing the session, the Speaker recommended that the Committee on Security and Defense discuss the details of popular committees and that a Sovereignty Committee be formed to submit recommendations regarding Coalition Forces.

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Tawafuq Walks Out  
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13. (U) At the July 2 session, Adnan al-Dulaimi read a statement condemning the Tayseer al-Mashadani abduction. Immediately thereafter, Tawafuq and Hewan members announced that they would suspend their participation in the Parliament until Ms. Mashadani is released. (NOTE: Before the session began, a cross-sectarian group of female parliamentarians held a press conference to condemn the abduction and to call for the release of Tayseer and her bodyguards. END NOTE.)

14. (C) Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) official and CoR member Ayad Samarai told PolOff July 2 that Tawafuq's statement and walkout were aimed at pressing GOI officials to improve CoR member's security quickly. Samarai said the GOI should provide armored cars to all CoR members. Samarai believed that Ministry of Interior officers at the Adhamiyah checkpoint where Tayseer al-Mashadani was kidnapped were indirectly responsible for her abduction. He accused the Sadrist Jaysh al-Mahdi of working in coordination with MOI officers to carry out the abduction. Samarai and IIP's Ala Mekki told PolOff they did not know when Tawafuq CoR members would return to the CoR sessions. PolOff told them the boycott would set a dangerous precedent. Both CoR members separately replied that they wanted the CoR Speaker and Deputy Speakers to pressure the Minister of Interior to find and ensure Mashadani's safe release.

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Remainder of Parliament Continues with Business  
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15. (C) Despite Tawafuq's continued absence from the CoR July 3, enough members of the Shia Coalition, Kurdish Alliance, and Iraqiyya attended to achieve a quorum and to act on all points on the legislative agenda except the extension of the state of emergency, which according to the prevailing CoR interpretation requires a two-thirds parliamentary vote. (Note: Article 61(9th) of the Constitution explicitly states a two-thirds CoR vote is required to consent to declaration of a state of emergency. The provision requiring "approval" for an extension could be interpreted differently, as the two-thirds requirement is not explicit in the text.) Deputy CoR Speaker Arif Taifour told PolFSN after the session that the CoR will continue its work, despite the Tawafuq boycott.

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The CoR is scheduled to meet July 4.

16. (C) Ala Mekki told PolOff July 3 that Tawafuq leaders, including Adnan al-Dulaimi and Ayad al-Samarai, had met earlier in the day to discuss next steps. Mekki said Tawafuq members would not return to the CoR on July 4, adding that he was not sure on what date they would end their boycott. Mekki said bloc leaders would hold a press conference and ask to meet directly with the Ministers of Interior and Defense to discuss their security concerns. PolOff urged both Mekki and Samarai to ensure a quick return of the Tawafuq members to Council sessions, noting that the boycott was self-defeating.

17. (C) COMMENT: Post will continue to urge Tawafuq CoR members to return to the legislature. Meanwhile, the Shia and Kurd representatives appear ready to continue parliamentary business without them. Whether or not the Jaysh al-Mahdi are responsible for the Mashadani abduction (as the Tawafuq members clearly suspect), the Sadrist call for popular committees served as another reminder of Moqtada's supporters readiness to capitalize on sectarian violence to advance their agenda. END COMMENT  
Khalilzad